

Implementation Sites Project



The purpose of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) Implementation Sites Project is to build on the success of the Mentor Model Courts. By engaging selected jurisdictions in cutting-edge program, policy, and initiative development, the NCJFCJ's Mentor Model Courts fulfill the goal of improving the outcomes for children in care.

The Implementation Sites Project seeks to accomplish this goal through guiding and assisting Lead Judges and collaborative team members in assessing current practices, implementing best practices outlined in the *Enhanced Resource Guidelines*, gathering data, measuring performance, and participating in ongoing training opportunities.

Improving Practice

Improvements pioneered by Mentor Model Courts can inspire Implementation Sites to achieve similar success in improving court practices. Below are a few examples of Mentor Model Courts which have reduced the number of children in care, increased adoptions, and reduced costs associated with out-of-home care.

Fewer Children in Care

Several Mentor Model Courts have reduced the number of children in foster care by 50% since becoming Model Courts. The **Cook County Juvenile Court (Chicago Model Court)**, for example, had 31,534 children in out-of-home placement in 1998, in comparison to 6,266 children in out-of-home care in 2014.

Increased Adoptions

In 2007, the **Baltimore City Model Court** had a total of 254 new adoption petitions filed. Of these cases, there were 235 completed adoptions for a clearance rate of 93%.

Reduced Costs

The **Tucson Model Court** implemented improved practices utilizing the *Resource Guidelines* to reduce the length of time a child remained under the jurisdiction of the court by 50%, and reduce the time children remained in out-of-home care from 400 days to 178 days, for an estimated savings of \$5 million.

“Model Courts use the *Resource Guidelines* as a basis for changing court process, with a focus not just on innovative projects, but on building a strong court foundation upon which projects unique to each jurisdiction can be developed.”

Judge Deborah Schumacher,
Reno Mentor Model Court, Nevada





Lead Judges & Demographics

Each Implementation Site was chosen because of its readiness and motivation for change, willingness to organize and form a strong collaborative team, and the demographics of the jurisdiction. Below is some additional information* for each of the Sites:

Montgomery, Alabama

in Montgomery County

Lead Judge: Judge Anita L. Kelly

Population: 230,148

Number of Judicial Officers: 3 judges and 1 referee

Number of Cases: 411

How Many Children Out-of-Home: 166

Hot Springs, Arkansas

in Garland County

Lead Judge: Judge Wade Naramore

Population: 97,173

Number of Judicial Officers: 1

Number of Cases: 78

How Many Children Out-of-Home: 131

Little Rock, Arkansas

in Perry & Pulaski Counties

Lead Judge: Judge Joyce Williams Warren

Population: 393,400

Number of Judicial Officers: 3

Number of Cases: 344

How Many Children Out-of-Home: 669

St. Paul, Minnesota

in Ramsey County

Lead Judge: Judge Mark Ireland

Population: 520,152

Number of Judicial Officers: 3

Number of Cases: 221

How Many Children Out-of-Home: 297

Tulsa, Oklahoma

in Tulsa County

Lead Judge: Judge Doris L. Fransein

Population: 622,409

Number of Judicial Officers: 2

Number of Cases: 958

How Many Children Out-of-Home: 1,955

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

in Allegheny County

Lead Judge: Judge Kim B. Clark

Population: 1.2 million

Number of Judicial Officers: 15 judges and 3 judicial officers

Number of Cases: 1,758

How Many Children Out-of-Home: 1,313

Memphis, Tennessee

in Shelby County

Lead Judge: Judge Dan Michael

Population: 940,764

Number of Judicial Officers: 6

Number of Cases: 1,011

How Many Children Out-of-Home: 1,032

Edinburg, Texas

in Hidalgo and Starr Counties

Lead Judge: Judge Carlos Villalon, Jr.

Population: 836,000

Number of Judicial Officers: 1

Number of Cases: 360

How Many Children Out-of-Home: 770

*Data and demographics collected as of January 2015.

Commitment Required

of an Implementation Site



From the **Lead Judge**

- Frequent and clear communication with the NCJFCJ Site Manager
- Judicial leadership and engagement with a multidisciplinary collaborative team
- Participate in Site Visits and Cross-Site Visits
- Active participation in implementing best practice recommendations
- Participate in ongoing judicial training
- Establish and track court performance measurements to evaluate the success and challenges of court system reform
- Attendance at annual All-Sites Conferences
- Coordination with and participation in State Court Improvement Project (CIP) initiatives
- Consistent collaboration with the NCJFCJ as a judicial faculty, committee member, and mentor for other courts

From the **Collaborative Team**

- Demonstrate commitment to critically examining policies, practice, and environment
- Attend regular stakeholder meetings to establish and monitor Site goals and action plans
- Active participation in Site Visits and Cross-Site Visits
- Meet NCJFCJ deadlines (e.g., requests for information and survey participation)
- Establish and track court performance measurements to evaluate the success and challenges of systems reform
- Participate in local court system reform

Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County in Memphis, Tennessee (left) and Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas Family Division in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania (right)



“Model Court has given us a vehicle to create a team where each member has committed to creating a joint vision on how our system can best serve at-risk children and families in our jurisdiction.”

Judge Michael Nash
Los Angeles Mentor Model Court,
California

NCJFCJ's Commitment

The NCJFCJ Site Managers will work closely and communicate with the Implementation Sites to determine best practices and prioritize court improvement goals.

Activities

Site Visits

Site Managers will assess each site through observation of court hearings, stakeholder interviews, and review of court files. The Site Manager will generate a report summarizing each visit and reviewing the court's goals, areas of improvement, and technical assistance needs.

Cross-Site Visits

Based on the needs of each site, the Lead Judge and members of the collaborative teams may visit Mentor Model Courts to learn about court innovations, observe hearings, and meet with their professional counterparts.



Child Protection Court of the Rio Grande Valley West in Edinburg, Texas (left) and Garland County Juvenile Court in Hot Springs, Arkansas (right)

Technical Assistance

The NCJFCJ is committed to providing the Implementation Sites with information and training on a wide range of topics related to court reform efforts.

As the Sites' goals, challenges, successes, and strategies are better developed, the Site Manager will be able to provide technical assistance and training tailored to each Site.

Technical Assistance can include:

- Goal setting and action planning
- Publications, briefs, and statutory updates
- Research on court improvement measures
- Data capacity assessments
- Networking with other judicial officers

Multi-Disciplinary Training opportunities:

- Child Abuse and Neglect Institute
- *Enhanced Resource Guidelines*
- Child and adolescent development
- Trauma-informed best practices
- Leadership





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The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges® (NCJFCJ), headquartered on the University of Nevada campus in Reno since 1969, provides cutting-edge training, wide-ranging technical assistance, and research to help the nation's courts, judges, and staff in their important work. Since its founding in 1937 by a group of judges dedicated to improving the effectiveness of the nation's juvenile courts, the NCJFCJ has pursued a mission to improve courts and systems practice and raise awareness of the core issues that touch the lives of many of our nation's children and families.

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Key Principles

for Permanency Planning for Children¹

Judging in juvenile court is specialized and complex, going beyond the traditional role of the judge. The Key Principles provide a foundation for improving the Implementation Sites' court systems through:

- 1 Keeping families together
- 2 Ensuring access to justice
- 3 Cultivating cultural responsiveness
- 4 Engaging families through Alternative Dispute Resolution techniques
- 5 Ensuring child safety, permanency, and well-being
- 6 Ensuring adequate and appropriate family time
- 7 Providing judicial oversight
- 8 Ensuring competent and adequately compensated representation
- 9 Advancing the development of adequate resources
- 10 Demonstrating judicial leadership and fostering collaboration

¹ National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. (2011). *Key principles for permanency planning*. Retrieved January 2015 from <http://www.ncjfcj.org/resource-library/publications/key-principles-permanency-planning-children>

For more information on the Implementation Sites Project, please visit www.NCJFCJ.org or contact **Melissa Gueller, Program Director, Child Abuse and Neglect**, NCJFCJ at mgueller@ncjfcj.org or (775) 784-7709.



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